

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jack Grapes: "Lake Pontchartrain Seawall" & "Lost Lake"

Jack Grapes · Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

Jack Grapes is an award-winning poet, playwright, actor, teacher, and the editor and publisher of *ONTHEBUS*, one of the top literary journals in the country.

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN SEAWALL

Not too many stones here
 on the cement wall by the lake,
 nor on the cement steps
 that descend into the black water,
 six deep at high tide, two deep at low.
 We used to put a stone on the steps
 for every girl we necked with
 in the back seat of our '56 Chevies
 parked a few feet from the shoreline wall.
 One summer, there must have been
 a hundred stones along the concrete top.
 The hurricanes would come in late August,
 early September.
 By fall, there was not one stone left;
 all had been carried off into the lake.
 Just seawall and concrete,
 far as the eye could see, from Lakeview
 to the Pontchartrain Causeway.
 Sometimes, in January or February,
 a stone would appear here, another over there.
 But they didn't last long.
 High winter waves from Gulf storms
 would wash them back into the lake.
 One summer, Peter Bordelon decided
 that if you broke up with a girl,
 you'd walk down to the seawall,
 pick up a stone, and skip it onto the waters
 of the lake, the dark placid waters
 that greedily swallowed

that offering to the god of teenage love,
 so you'd always remember
 that it was you who reached down
 and threw the stone away,
 not the fickle red-head
 buttoning her blouse in the front seat
 of your car, anxious to get home
 to her bucket of stones.

LOST LAKE

What happens when you try
 believing in God is things begin
 to fall apart.
 Like when we were lost
 trying to find Lost Lake
 high in the high
 Sierras, leaning against
 a large boulder unable
 to go on, munching
 gorp from our army pack
 and ready to fall
 in the snow and call it
 quits. I remember that
 to this day. Calling it
 quits, I mean. My old
 football coach Mr. Palone
 would have killed me
 if he'd known I was ready
 to call it quits,
 and the irony, Lost Lake
 was only 30 yards away,
 over the next rise.
 Gleaming and teaming
 with fish.
 That's what happens when
 you climb miles
 with a fifty pound backback
 in the high Sierras,
 and the beauty of nature
 makes you believe in God
 and then things begin to fall apart.
 I suppose it's somewhat like love.
 You believe in love and then
 things begin to fall apart.
 Better not to believe in it,
 but what happens when it comes
 to you, brown-eyed and wishing

only the best for you.
Can love be returned even
when you don't believe in it?
A part of me is still leaning
against that boulder,
next to my best friend Allan,
who in his own way,
had given up too,
and I've never known Allan
to ever give up.
But we both had had it.
So we leaned against that stone
and ate our gorp, biding our time,
assuming that what is lost
is never lost forever,
and like love, comes looking for you
when you least expect it,
even when you've stopped
believing in it.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013 at 5:38 pm and is filed under [Poetry](#).
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